New Technology Creating a Safer Transportation System in Kentucky

Each day, thousands of semi-trucks roll through Kentucky carrying freight to destinations throughout the nation. They travel interstate highways that cross over one-third of the state's counties, and they carry in them a wide array of goods and other commodities. Because of location and a number of other factors, Kentucky's interstate transportation system is thriving, making the security of Kentucky's highways a critical issue.

The Kentucky Office of Homeland Security, in partnership with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and Kentucky Vehicle Enforcement, are working to strengthen the security of Kentucky's roadways by putting into place new technology that will work to compliment Governor Fletcher's vision of a safe and reliable transportation system.

On August 12, 2005, Governor Fletcher and U.S. Congressman Hal Rogers, along with representatives from the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Kentucky Vehicle Enforcement and the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security, unveiled a new system that will improve the commercial vehicle inspection process and prevent the transportation of dangerous materials that otherwise would go unnoticed. In addition to detecting radioactive materials, the machines can also identify illegal narcotics that are being smuggled through the interstate system.

The Laurel County northbound weigh station, on I-75 between Corbin and London, is now the site of an integrated system intended to help vehicle inspectors called Integrated Safety and Security Enforcement System (ISSES). ISSES includes a radiation detection system, a license plate reader, an infrared brake monitoring system, an integrated user interface and a chemical detection unit. These features were recently added to the weigh station to detect radioactive material for safety and security, quickly and accurately identify commercial vehicles and improve the vehicle inspection process.

"As part of our continued effort to provide a safe and reliable transportation system that will strengthen our state's security and economy, I'm pleased to dedicate this improved, highly-advanced weigh station," said Governor Fletcher. "Our Kentucky Vehicle Enforcement inspectors and officers combined with this new technology will help keep our roads safe and our commerce moving."

As this new technology is integrated into our state, jobs are also being created. The radiation detecting devices are being assembled in Laurel County. In the coming

months, the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security is providing funding for six more units to be placed at weigh stations throughout Kentucky.

Congressman Hal Rogers is the chairman of the House Subcommittee on Homeland Security which funds homeland security efforts throughout the nation. "The technology that has been installed at this weigh station is truly cutting edge," said Congressman Rogers. "Information gained from this project and others like it will help our scientists and engineers to learn how to better protect our nation from terrorist attacks, while also helping keep unsafe vehicles and illicit drugs that are being transported unlawfully out of our communities. This project illustrates what we can accomplish by pulling together the resources of our Universities and the private and public sector."

The Transportation Cabinet partnered with Oak Ridge National Laboratory and the Kentucky Transportation Center to implement the new system. Their goal is that ISSES will help the vehicle inspectors find more unsafe or noncompliant trucks and carriers and let the safe and legal trucks keep moving.

Alecia Webb-Edgington, Interim Director of the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security, commented on the state of the art detection devices as an integral part of the national security strategy. "The implementation of these devices is a significant piece in our prevention-focused homeland security strategy. U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff stated last month that, 'our work must be guided by the understanding that effective security is built upon a network of systems that spans all levels of government and the private sector.' This radiation detector system is certainly an example of that type of partnership, and we look forward to working on other prevention initiatives that will ensure Kentucky is ready and prepared."